

MAY 2, 1974

Newscasters are blabbing their tongues raw condemning the first quarter financial reports of the oil companies. Some of the Senators up in Washington are bellowing that the fossil fuel miners are making such high profits that they should be embarrassed. Where the reporters or the politicians arrived at the idea that making a profit, large or small, is embarrassing, is a mystery known only to those who live by their pen and mouth.

In the Shortgrass Country, herders cherish a profit. Hombres who can turn four-legged stock into coin are held in high esteem. Folks are apt to call you Mr. So-and-So if your operation happens to show a slight tint of black.

I don't think anyone out here would understand Washington's concept of shame. Years ago, we were taught that the most humiliating circumstances would be to have an accident and end up on the operating table wearing socks that were unmatched or undergarments held together by a safety pin. We weren't prepared to avoid profits; we were prepared to die after a stately entrance into an emergency room.

I never left town that my Mother didn't check on my socks and shorts. I didn't know anything about doctors or nurses, but I figured from the way she carried on, they'd send you to Potter's Hill still breathing if your underwear or socks didn't pass their fashion test. Every time I'd leave, I'd worry whether this was going to be the trip that ended up under a harsh light, waking up with a bunch of nurses and doctors snickering and pointing at a strand of broken elastic.

She never did mention that profit making was something to be ashamed of. Of course, as you probably know, back in the '30s parents would have had to lap the entire circumference of the earth eight times to find an example of the evils of making money.

In those times, church janitors didn't do as well as church mice do today. People who wore store-bought shoestrings were considered show-offs. So many citizens were broke that the IRS considered consolidating with the WPA.

Worrying about how my socks and underwear looked has had a deep effect on my life. To this very day, I can't leave the house without acting like I'm on a suicide mission. Forty years of preparation for an accident is a long time. It takes a lot of pleasure from traveling to be constantly thinking that your shorts might be sagging to your shoe tops.

The oilmen who come by the ranch don't appear to be embarrassed. Shush pits can burn off the whole side of a hill, and they still ask to bring their family quail hunting.

I don't see any of them hanging their heads. I know plenty of reasons why some of them should be ashamed, but that's the case of every mortal being.

The politicians have been acting mighty strange before and since the energy crisis. I wouldn't come out and say that some of them might be sniffing glue or perhaps suffering from an overdose of confusion gas, but I wouldn't mind the FBI checking on how much glue was on their expense accounts and if there might not be a slow gas leak in the halls.

Things sure do get confusing. I hate to hear what the press and the loose tongues will call this year's losses on cattle. It's going to be worth waiting to see. I do know they are going to change their definition of "embarrassing." There's a lot to be said for living 2000 miles from Washington, D.C.

